

## **7 FAM 050**

# **CONSULAR INFORMATION PROGRAM, WARDEN MESSAGES AND THE NO DOUBLE STANDARD POLICY**

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*  
*(Office of Origin: CA/OCS/PRI)*

## **7 FAM 051 INTRODUCTION**

### **7 FAM 051.1 Summary**

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

This subchapter concerns the Consular Information Program, established in late 1992-1993 to replace the earlier "Travel Advisory" program and fully address the "No Double Standard" policy (see 7 FAM 052). Through this tiered program, the Department informs U.S. citizens/nationals of potential threats to their health or safety abroad. See What Are Travel Warnings, Consular Information Sheets & Public Announcements on the Consular Affairs Internet web page, where you will find the current Consular Information Sheets, Public Announcements, and Travel Warnings. The Consular Information Program also includes Warden Messages issued by posts abroad, Fact Sheets issued by the Department to address topical issues and travel brochures. In addition, the Department (CA/OCS) may issue a Worldwide Caution Public Announcement or regional Public Announcements from time to time.

**All posts and bureaus are to follow the guidance set forth in this section.**

**ONLY A SEVENTH FLOOR PRINCIPAL OF THE DEPARTMENT CAN AUTHORIZE EXCEPTIONS TO THIS GUIDANCE.**

### **7 FAM 051.2 Authorities**

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

The Consular Information Program is not mandated by statute, but several statutes are relevant to the Department's performance of this function: Section 505 of the Omnibus Diplomatic Security and Antiterrorism Act of 1986 requires the Secretary to notify Congress whenever the Department

issues a travel warning because of a terrorist threat or other security concern (22 U.S.C. 2656e). Section 321(f) of the Aviation Security Improvement Act of 1990, Public Law 101-604 (49 U.S.C. 44905), prohibits the notification of a civil aviation threat to "only selective potential travelers unless such threat applies only to them." See 7 FAM 040 No Double Standard Policy. See also 22 CFR 71.1, 22 U.S.C. 2671 (b)(2)(A), 22 U.S.C. 4802, 22 U.S.C. 211a, Section 321(f) of the Aviation Security Improvement Act of 1990), 46 U.S.C. 1804.

## 7 FAM 051.3 Dissemination

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings and Public Announcements, and Fact Sheets are disseminated widely both in the United States and abroad. Methods of distribution include the following:

- Consular Affairs Internet web page
- Internet Based Registration System (IBRS) (See 7 FAM 040)
- CA Call Center (1-888-407-4747 (Calling from the United States and Canada) or (202-501-4444) (Calling from Overseas)
- Overseas Security and Advisory Council Internet page (OSAC) through the Diplomatic Security Bureau
- Listserve electronic subscriptions (the Consular Information Program documents reach a wide range of travel agents, airline computer reservation systems, and other interested parties, including the House of Representatives Information System (H.I.S.) by this electronic transfer of information)
- The media through the Bureau of Public Affairs

## 7 FAM 051.4 Dealing With Your Host Government

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

- a. Host country officials occasionally express dismay or resentment about U.S. Government's public dissemination of security-related warnings. The Department has no higher responsibility than the safety and security of U.S. citizens. You may explain that U.S. law requires that we share information with U.S. citizens that will assist them to make prudent decisions about their own safety.
- b. In certain situations, but **only with PRIOR PERMISSION from the Department**, you may inform the host government of the imminent release of a Travel Warning. **Travel Warnings, Public Announcements and Consular Information Sheets are never**

**subject to negotiation with or censoring by a foreign government.**

## **7 FAM 052 NO DOUBLE STANDARD POLICY**

### **7 FAM 052.1 Statement of Policy**

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

- a. In administering the travel information program, the Department of State applies a “no double standard” policy to important security threat information, including criminal information.
  - (1) Such information, if shared by the Department with the official U.S. community, generally should be made available to the non-official U.S. community if the underlying threat applies to both official and non-official Americans.
  - (2) If a post issues information to its employees about potentially dangerous situations, it should evaluate whether the potential danger could also affect private U.S. citizens/U.S. non-citizen nationals living in or traveling through the affected area.
  - (3) If so, the post should notify the Department and request approval of dissemination of the information to the public.
  - (4) The policy is not intended to prevent the limited distribution of information about threats to specific U.S. citizens/U.S. non-citizen nationals or U.S. corporations. Important security information may be shared on a limited basis when directed toward a specific target or when appropriate to counter a particular threat.

### **7 FAM 052.2 Origin of Policy**

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

In 1990, Congress passed the Aviation Security Improvement Act, which, in Section 109, added to the Federal Aviation Act a requirement that the President “develop guidelines for ensuring notification to the public of threats to civil aviation in appropriate cases”. The Act requires that the guidelines identify the officials responsible for deciding whether public notification of a threat is in the best interests of the United States and the traveling public, based on a consideration of among things, the specificity of the threat, the credibility of the information, and the ability to counter the threat. The guidelines were to be distributed to appropriate officials in the Departments of Transportation, State, and Justice, as well as to air carriers. The law prohibits selective notification of a threat to civil aviation to only selective potential travelers unless the threat applies only to them. These and other

related provisions are now codified in 49 U.S.C. 44905. After enactment of these provisions, the Department decided to follow similar policies in non-civil aviation contexts.

## **7 FAM 053 PROCEDURES FOR ISSUANCE OF CONSULAR INFORMATION SHEETS, TRAVEL WARNINGS, AND PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **7 FAM 053.1 General**

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

- a. The Bureau of Consular Affairs is responsible for the issuance of Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings, and Public Announcements on behalf of the Department of State. The Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs is responsible for supervising and managing the travel information program. The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Overseas Citizens Services has primary day-to-day supervisory responsibility for the program. The Department requires all posts, regional bureaus, and appropriate functional bureaus to cooperate fully in this activity.
- b. Within the Bureau of Consular Affairs, the Directorate of Overseas Citizens Services (CA/OCS) is responsible for the day-to-day management and issuance of travel information, including coordinating the preparation of all Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings and Public Announcements, and Fact Sheets before their release. (1 FAM 255 c.)
- c. CA/OCS reviews the need for a Travel Warning when information comes to its attention indicating a situation that may warrant deferral of travel to a particular country or major parts of it. Requests for issuance of a Travel Warning may also originate from a post or from elsewhere within the Department. In addition, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS), the Bureau for International Narcotics Matters (INM), the Office of Counter-Terrorism (S/CT)), and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) inform the Director of CA/OCS of conditions warranting inclusion in an Information Sheet or that may necessitate a Travel Warning or Public Announcement. Other U.S. Government agencies may also contribute to this process. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Environmental Protection Agency have contributed greatly to Consular Information Program documents related to certain health hazards.
- d. **Clearances:**
  - (1) All Consular Information Sheets are cleared by the affected regional

bureau and the Bureau of Public Affairs (PA).

- (2) Travel Warnings must be cleared with a Deputy Assistant Secretary or higher in the affected regional bureaus.
  - (3) All Travel Warnings are cleared by PA and the office of the Under Secretary for Political Affairs (P).
  - (4) Travel Warnings related to security threats are also cleared by DS, S/CT and INM.
- e. **Disagreements Between Bureaus:** Disagreements among bureaus over Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings or Public Announcements are generally resolved by either the Under Secretary for Political Affairs (P) or the Under Secretary for Management (M).

**Note FYI:** In June 2003, an Accountability Review Board provided for a review of Consular Information Program documents “to ensure that there are no political statements. The documents will also reiterate personal security safeguards and the need to be vigilant. **The Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs will be authorized to determine the final wording of the Consular Information Program documents.**”

## 7 FAM 053.2 Security Threats

### 7 FAM 053.2-1 Department’s Role

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

- a. The security threat information contained in Public Announcements and Travel Warnings is derived from threat information gathered from multiple sources, including our posts, the U.S. intelligence community, open sources, and our allies.
- b. When security threat information is received, the relevant bureaus in the Department and other government agencies work attempt to evaluate whether a security threat is credible, specific, (aimed at a particular individual or group and/or identifying a time and place) and counterable (can be avoided by taking appropriate measures).
- c. If a threat evaluated as credible, specific and non-counterable is targeted to a specific group or individual, then the Department may notify only that group or individual of the threat. For example, if easily identifiable members of the local U.S. community, such as employees of a particular company, are targeted, there would normally be no need to disseminate the threat information beyond the targeted group.
- d. If a threat evaluated as credible, specific and non-counterable is aimed at a broad group (e.g., U.S. citizens or interests, generally), the Department

may issue a Public Announcement or Travel Warning, and may authorize the relevant posts to issue a Warden Message.

## 7 FAM 053.2-2 Post's Role

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

- a. To ensure that the Department and posts avoid providing contradictory information on security threats to U.S. citizens/nationals, it is essential that you coordinate with the Department on dissemination of any information about potential threats to the safety and travel of U.S. citizens/nationals.
- b. If you learn of a security threat, report it to the Department following the established procedures at your post. At this stage, you should not disseminate information about the threat beyond those with a "need to know" (i.e., persons who could develop additional information or help to counter the threat) to avoid violating the "no double standard" policy (see 7 FAM 053). In the event the information is mistakenly disseminated to U.S.G. employees and/or others without a need to know, you should notify the Department immediately.
- c. If you believe that you should warn post personnel and/or issue a Warden Message warning the local U.S. citizen/national community about a security threat, you should cable the basis for your concern, along with the proposed text of the message, to the Department for prior approval. If your message pertains to a threat so immediate that you cannot wait until Washington opening-of-business, clear your message with your CA/OCS/ACS desk officer (during Washington business hours), and/or the CA/OCS duty officer (outside of normal working hours), with the proposed Warden Message text. The duty officer may be contacted by calling the Department of State Operations Center. The CA/OCS/ACS desk officer or CA/OCS duty officer will obtain clearances from CA, the regional bureau, Diplomatic Security, and any other relevant bureaus.
- d. You may disseminate information about a threat without prior Departmental approval **ONLY** if immediate notice is critical to the security of U.S. citizens/nationals and there is no time to seek the Department's approval. In such a case, you should cable the Department the text of the message immediately after its issuance, specifying how it was disseminated. The Department will then decide whether to issue a Public Announcement or Travel Warning.
- e. Remember that if you conclude you should warn your personnel or any U.S. Government employees, whether permanently stationed or on temporary duty abroad, about a security threat, your request for Department approval to warn post personnel should also include a request to share that same information with the non-official U.S.

community under the "no double standard" policy (see 7 FAM 052). The policy applies whether the information is shared with U.S. Government employees in town meetings, in post newsletters, by e-mail, or on the telephone. The threat or warning information might include information about locations within the host country including hotels, restaurants, entertainment spots, places of worship, tourist sites, etc. Unless the threat is specific to a particular institution for reasons peculiar to that institution, you should not list names of specific locations, including names of hotels or restaurants, for which threat or warning information is available. You should also refrain from developing lists of "approved" hotels. In providing such lists to the community, you may actually increase the risk that perpetrators could change the target, thus increasing the risk to U.S. citizens/nationals who may be relying on such lists.

- f. The Secretary's Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) was created to foster the exchange of unclassified security related information between the U.S. Government and the U.S. private sector operating abroad. OSAC provides the U.S. private sector with timely information on which to base informed decisions on how best to protect their assets. OSAC is responsible for ensuring that information about specific, credible, non-counterable threats that they learn about from posts is provided to their corporate security headquarters in the United States on a need to know basis only. If a post shares information on a specific, credible and non-counterable threat with the OSAC constituency in a country, then you must also communicate that information to the rest of the non-official U.S. community under the "No Double Standard" policy. Notifying OSAC does not absolve consular officers of the responsibility to keep members of the private U.S. community informed. (1 FAM 262.1.)
- g. You should contact the Department as soon as possible when you know in advance that a situation may warrant a Warden Message. For example, if you believe there is a potential for violence affiliated with public demonstrations planned around political rallies or marking an anniversary of a political or other major event, you should send in the request as early as possible to allow the Department to respond promptly and appropriately (e.g., authorize the issuance of a Warden Message and determine whether the information needs to be distributed in a Public Announcement). It is helpful not to wait to request Department approval until the day before the anniversary of an event known well in advance to have potential for provoking demonstrations and violence.
- h. Post management should ensure that U.S. Government agencies under Chief of Mission authority understand fully the U.S. Government's "No Double Standard" policy and Department's guidance on the policy. Chiefs of Mission should advise these U.S.G. agencies that if they share information on a specific, credible, non-counterable threat with their



employees beyond those with a legitimate "need to know," they must share that same information with the non-official U.S. community. You would initially accomplish the sharing of information with the local non-official U.S. community by the issuing a Warden Message, cleared by the Department as outlined above. If appropriate, you would then coordinate with the Department on the issuance of a Travel Warning or Public Announcement or the revision of a Consular Information Sheet (CIS).

## 7 FAM 054 CONSULAR INFORMATION SHEETS

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

- a. **Summary:** The Department, through the Bureau of Consular Affairs, issues Consular Information Sheets for every country in the world. Consular Information Sheets (CIS) provide basic information to enable a traveler to make an informed decision concerning travel to a particular country. For instance, a CIS describes entry and exit requirements, road safety, crime information, areas of instability, aviation safety oversight and customs information, among other things, and it contains the address and telephone number of the U.S. embassy and consulate. CA works with posts to update Consular Information Sheets at least bi-annually. We use the CIS as a vital resource that contains up-to-date information for those traveling or living abroad. Besides changes in circumstances unique to your consular district, there are periodic changes to information that pertains to all posts.
- b. **CIS Template:** We write the CIS using a template. CA/OCS/ACS country officers provide posts with the current version of the model document when the CIS is due for revision.
- c. Unless they include a Travel Warning (see section 7 FAM 056), Consular Information Sheets are intended to present general facts to the public, not to provide advice. It is the reader's responsibility to decide about the advisability of travel.

## 7 FAM 055 PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

Public Announcements are issued to disseminate information about relatively short-term conditions posing imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens/nationals. Public Announcements may also address transnational conditions, e.g. a Worldwide Caution Public Announcement. Terrorist attacks, coups or anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations/violence, and demonstrations related to an international



conference or sports event may generate a Public Announcement. The opening paragraph of a Public Announcement should describe, as explicitly as possible, the developments that prompted the issuance of the document. When a new Public Announcement supersedes an existing one, the first paragraph will also include an evaluation of whether the situation in the country is improving or deteriorating.

## **7 FAM 056 TRAVEL WARNINGS**

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

Travel Warnings recommend that U.S. citizens defer travel to a country because the situation is dangerous or unstable and/or the U.S. Government's ability to assist U.S. citizens is constrained due to a drawdown or closure. The opening paragraph of a Travel Warning describes, as explicitly as possible, the developments in a country or region that prompted the issuance of the warning. The first paragraph also states that U.S. citizens should defer travel to a country due to the situation and/or because the U.S. Government's ability to assist them is constrained by an embassy drawdown or closure. When a new Travel Warning supersedes an existing one, the first paragraph will also include an evaluation of whether the situation in the country is improving or deteriorating.

## **7 FAM 057 FACT SHEETS**

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

The Bureau of Consular Affairs also issues Fact Sheets to address specific issues related to the health and safety of U.S. citizens abroad.

### **Fact Sheet Examples ...**

Avian Flu Fact Sheet

SARS Fact Sheet

Foot and Mouth Disease Fact Sheet

Chemical Biological Agents Fact Sheet

Behavior Modification Facilities Fact Sheet

Responding to Radiological and Nuclear Incidents

## **7 FAM 058 WARDEN MESSAGES**

## 7 FAM 058.1 SUMMARY

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

- a. Along with Consular Information Sheets, Public Announcements and Travel Warnings, warden messages are an important component of the Department's Consular Information Program. This section provides guidance on writing, clearing and appropriate use of warden messages. See 7 FAM 070 on warden systems.
- b. **When to Activate the Warden Network:** Posts should use warden messages to disseminate information about routine topics such as voter registration, income tax season, new passport procedures, and other non-security related issues important to the local U.S. citizen community. Whenever the Department revises the Worldwide Caution or issues a Public Announcement or Travel Warning for your country or region you should disseminate it via your warden network. Warden messages are most importantly used to inform U.S. citizens about events or threats that can affect their personal security.

## 7 FAM 058.2 Writing a Warden Message

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

- a. The Department's "no double standard" policy, provided in 7 FAM 052, is an integral part of our approach to warden messages. The double standard we guard against is in sharing threat-related information with the official U.S. community -- beyond those whose job involves investigating and evaluating threats -- but not disseminating it to the U.S. citizen general public when that information does or could apply to them as well. If information is mistakenly disseminated to the official U.S. community -- either in writing or by word-of-mouth -- who do not have a need to know, post should inform CA/OCS. The Department will work with post to develop language that is appropriate to release to the public.
- b. The nature of a potential threat, time factors, front office demands, and other pressures are often swirling around consular officers tasked with writing warden messages. The following guidance should help whether all is quiet or chaos reigns:
  - (1) **Keep It Short and To the Point:** Many warden networks involve phone trees and messages are passed orally. Consular officers should remind their wardens not to paraphrase messages but to deliver them verbatim. It is much easier for everyone to adhere to this policy if messages are short. Your message should be straightforward and as specific as possible.
  - (2) When you provide advice on security precautions, also try to

provide guidance on how to approach a specific incident. For example, if you are cautioning the American community to avoid a particular neighborhood in the capital because demonstrations are likely, you should remind American citizens that even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn into confrontational situations, possibly escalate into violence and so should always be avoided.

- (3) **Never use classified language.** Although this should be apparent, there have been a number of incidents where classified information was used in notices to the official community and then planned for release to the general public. Unless the Department can obtain an unclassified version of the information, it cannot be disseminated beyond those with a need to know for investigative or assessment purposes. Releasing it to any others in the mission would create a "Double Standard" situation.
- (4) **Use previously cleared language whenever possible.** You have enough to do without having to reinvent the warden message every time. Whenever appropriate to your situation, feel free to crib from previous warden messages, the Consular Information Sheet, Public Announcement/Travel Warning, or Worldwide Caution Public Announcement.
- (5) Always include your post's phone number, address, and website at the end of your message.
- (6) Avoid using the word "unconfirmed", such as in, "According to unconfirmed reports..." If reports are unconfirmed, you should not be disseminating them.
- (7) Avoid terms such as "credible and specific" when referring to threats. While the Department uses these terms in evaluating threat information, they should not be used in a warden message.

## **7 FAM 058.3 Procedures for Issuing a Warden Message**

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

- a. To ensure that the U.S. Government's "No Double Standard" policy (see 7 FAM 052) is not violated and that the traveling public (i.e., those not yet in your country) know of impending threats, **you should not** issue warden messages pertaining to safety or security of private U.S. citizens without first clearing the language with the Department except in extraordinarily urgent circumstances. See 7 FAM 053.2-2.
- b. Whenever you issue any/any warden message, whether or not approved by the Department, always email and/or fax a copy of the message to

your CA/OCS/ACS country officer.

- c. Post a cleared warden message on your mission's website for the duration of its validity. Do not forget to remove it when it is no longer current.

## **7 FAM 058.4 Emergency Preparedness – Temporary Closure**

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

- a. If a security situation requires your post to close to the public, you must inform the public via a warden message. As in the case of other messages related to security threats, the Department should clear on such a message in all but extraordinarily urgent circumstances. The CA/OCS Duty Officer, who can be reached through the Operations Center, will coordinate obtaining the clearances from the duty officers of the required bureaus. Those duty officers will obtain the clearances from the bureau principals as necessary. In time sensitive cases, the Operations Center can conference in all the interested bureaus after hours. See 7 FAM 053.2-2. The warden message should include the following details:
  - (1) The circumstances that caused the closure to the public, worded in a way that is publicly releasable (unclassified).
  - (2) The effective date of post closing to the public, and the likely re-opening date, if known. Also note in this message which days the embassy would have been closed anyway due to local holiday/normal weekend closures; e.g., "effective date of closure to the public is May 5, with expected re-opening day of May 7. Note May 6 is a local holiday, and post would have been closed anyway on that day."
  - (3) Which sections are closed to the public (e.g., passport and visa services, library, and FCS office closed).
  - (4) Any provisions made for emergency services to U.S. citizens, if applicable.
  - (5) Phone number/contact information for use by U.S. citizens who seek emergency citizen services.
- b. Since warden messages are a primary method for you to maintain contact with the US citizen community in country, we suggest that post's emergency action plan incorporate strategies to keep this channel of communication open when post is under a state of emergency or during events such as a temporary closure to the public.
- c. In this regard, the consular section should have an established method of sending warden messages from a location off the embassy compound in the event that the embassy building is closed or the security situation is

such that the official American community must remain indoors. Post may consider putting the warden address list on a CD-ROM or loading the address list to an email account in the private domain to permit sending warden messages from a residence or an alternate command center. We suggest the consular section enlist the Information Programs Officer's (IPO) for assistance, if necessary, and remember to use the **Blind Courtesy Copy line** for addressing emailed warden messages to prevent misuse of the warden address list.

## **7 FAM 058.5 Warden Fatigue**

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

Warden fatigue is a constant worry, particularly for a post dealing with significant political violence or instability. You may be able to reduce the frequency of your warden messages if you include in your country's Consular Information Sheet (CIS) information about a potentially violent activity that occurs frequently and/or multiple disruptive events that occur in a particular area. For example, demonstrations related to elections or the anniversary of an important event in the country may be common, recurring periodically or even annually. Including this type of information in the CIS will ensure that the public has already had the opportunity to learn about a potentially dangerous place or time to travel and can take preventive action. Close communication between American Citizens Services officers and Regional Security officers helps ensure that regional security officers (RSOs) are providing to official Americans the same information ACS is offering to the non-official community, again ensuring we comply with the No Double Standard policy. See 7 FAM 052.

## **7 FAM 58.6 Use Department Language –Don't Paraphrase**

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

You may wish to call the attention of the local U.S. community to existing security or safety information. In such instances, use language from current Public Announcements, Warden Messages, Travel Warnings, and Consular Information Sheets. This language has already been cleared with all relevant Department bureaus and, when appropriate, other Washington organizations. The language reflects the various concerns of the clearing offices. Any change to the language may alter a meaning that a clearing office thought was important.

## **7 FAM 059 TRAVEL BROCHURES**

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

In addition to Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings, Public Announcements and Fact Sheets, the Bureau of Consular Affairs issues travel brochures with a wide range of information on travel abroad. These brochures are available on the Consular Affairs Internet webpage. The brochures are also available from the Federal Citizen Information Center in Pueblo, Colorado and for sale by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Mailstop: SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-9328 or see the GPO On Line Bookstore.

**Travel Brochure Examples ...**

Your Trip Abroad

A Safe Trip Abroad

Travel Tips for Older Americans

Tips for Women Traveling Alone

Tips for Travelers With Disabilities

Tips for Americans Residing Abroad

Help for American Victims of Crime Overseas

Tips for Students

Travel Warning on Drugs Abroad

Tips for Travelers to Canada

Tips for Travelers to the Caribbean

Tips for Travelers to Central and South America

Tips for Travelers to Mexico

Tips for Business Travelers to Nigeria

Tips for Travelers to Sub-Saharan Africa

Tips for Travelers to the Middle East & North Africa

Tips for Travelers to Russia

Tips for Travelers to China

Tips for Travelers to South Asia